

Delaware a national leader in career pathways, case study finds

When it comes to career and technical education and preparing young people for life after high school, Delaware is emerging as a national and international leader, according to “Propelling College and Career Success: The Role of Strategic Partnerships in Scaling Delaware Pathways,” a case study just released by [Jobs for the Future \(JFF\)](#).

The case study is part of a larger series, supported by a gift from the James and Judith K. Dimon Foundation to Harvard University, examining how states and regions are preparing tomorrow’s workforce and highlighting promising practices that can inform other college and career readiness efforts around the country.

In Delaware, nearly 9,000 students are enrolled in a statewide initiative called [Delaware Pathways](#), which is designed to provide college and career preparation for youth. Under the program, high school students who enroll develop needed skills, get real work experience, earn college credit at no cost to their families, and gain industry-recognized credentials that prepare them for postsecondary education or employment when they graduate. The program has grown exponentially since its inception in 2014, with just 27 students enrolled in an advanced manufacturing pathway, to 4,922 students enrolled in a Pathway program in the 2016-17 school year, and an anticipated 9,000-plus students in the 2017-18 school year (exact enrollment numbers to be released in November 2017). At the same time, participating businesses are developing a strong local workforce of the future while helping students gain the knowledge and skills needed to be job-ready upon graduation.

The case study, authored by National Center on Education and the Economy Senior Editor Robert Rothman, lauds Delaware's strong and diverse partnership that includes the K-12 system, businesses, higher education, and community agencies and organizations. Delaware's collaborative nature, ability to respond to economic demands, and small size are cited as contributors to Delaware Pathways' success.

"Delaware has emerged very quickly as a national leader in the career pathways movement," said **Robert Schwartz, senior research fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and co-founder of the Pathways Network**. "It set an ambitious goal of having half of its high school students enrolled in career pathways by 2019, and it is on-track to meet that goal. Its work has been characterized by careful planning, robust support for implementation, and an extraordinary spirit of collaboration across agency and sector lines."

"Propelling College and Career Success" traces the origins of Delaware Pathways to 2014, when Delaware began connecting national and local stakeholders to build a broad coalition of partners around a concept coined "The Delaware Promise," a pledge to increase the proportion of Delaware residents with college degrees or postsecondary credentials to 65 percent (up from 40 percent) by 2025 and to enroll half of all Delaware high school students in career pathways by 2019.

"This initiative is critical not just for the future of the high school students enrolled but for the future of our state," said **Governor John Carney**, who made career preparation one of his education platform issues when he took office this year. "Investing in Delaware's economy starts with providing a quality education for Delaware's children and making sure that our students have the skills necessary to compete and succeed."

In Delaware, partners highlighted in the case study include the state Department of Education, the state Department of Labor, Delaware Technical Community College, the United Way of Delaware, the Rodel Foundation, and the Delaware Workforce Development Board.

The study also spotlights how Appoquinimink School District redesigned its two high schools into “schools,” each of which includes one or more career pathways. As part of each pathway, students can take Advanced Placement courses or dual enrollment classes to earn college credit, and each also includes work-based learning experiences with partnering businesses. Some of the pathways also have spread to begin in middle schools.

Appoquinimink Superintendent Matt Burrows said the redesign was aimed at supporting all students, including those who did not intend to go on to four-year colleges: “For a long time, we have been saying college and career readiness. We’ve done a wonderful job on the college piece. We want to do a better job on the career piece.”

Other case studies in the series, which will be published over the next several months, feature Marlborough, Massachusetts and Tennessee. The series spotlights states and regions that are members of JFF’s [Pathways to Prosperity Network](#), a collaboration focused on building college and career pathways that was launched by JFF and the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2012. The growth and progress of the Pathways to Prosperity Network is chronicled in a new book, *Learning for Careers*, published by the Harvard Education Press and co-authored by Nancy Hoffman and Robert Schwartz, who jointly founded the Network.

“Propelling College and Career Success: The Role of Strategic

Partnerships in Scaling Delaware Pathways” was officially released Tuesday at the national Pathways to Prosperity Network Fall Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

To read “Propelling College and Career Success: The Role of Strategic Partnerships in Scaling Delaware Pathways,” visit <http://www.jff.org/initiatives/pathways-prosperity-network>.

About Jobs for the Future:

[Jobs for the Future](#) is a national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations in the United States. JFF develops innovative career and educational programs and public policies that increase college readiness and career success, and build a more highly skilled workforce. With over 30 years of experience, JFF is the national leader in bridging education and work to increase economic mobility and strengthen our economy

About Delaware Pathways:

[Delaware Pathways](#) is a state-wide initiative aimed at engaging students in career exploration and training through sets of curriculum focused on specific industry-based “pathways,” paired with opportunities to gain workplace experience while still in high school, graduate with a head start on a college degree, and to best prepare for post-secondary education (including two-year and four-year degrees, professional certificates or apprenticeships) and career. Delaware Pathways is a unique collaboration of school districts, businesses, higher education, and national advisory partners that represent a “new way to do school.”

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